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ABSTRACT

The Texas "Families First" project was started to accomplish the following: (1) strengthen the capacity of local family literacy projects to design, support, and administer high quality programs by leveraging resources from several agencies in the state; and (2) finalize the indicators of program quality (IPQs) in early childhood education for Even Start family literacy programs. The three institutions of higher education involved in the project during the first year identified instruments for assessment in early childhood education and provided opportunities for staff in Head Start and Even Start programs to learn to use the instruments and to conduct follow-up meetings with Even Start programs. Findings from the meetings included the following: (1) only 51 percent of Even Start programs were represented at the focus group meetings; (2) although participants learned a great deal about the instruments, they did not feel they were able to administer them properly without more training; (3) three assessments were identified as used most often in Even Start; (4) participants identified strengths and weaknesses for the five instruments demonstrated in the training meetings; and (5) some programs plan to add at least one of the instruments to their assessment package. Recommendations were made for improvements in the timing of assessment training, cost of assessment instruments, standardization of assessment across the state, program accountability, input from early childhood specialists in the development of the IPQs, accountability based upon factors beyond a local program's control, and standardization versus the unique needs of each program. (KC)

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Families First Family Literacy Project

Annual Report: 2000

by

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Executive Summary

The Texas "Families First" project was initiated to (1) strengthen the capacity of local family literacy projects to design, support, and administer high quality programs through leveraging resources from several agencies in the State, and (2) finalize the indicators of program quality (IPQs) in early childhood education for Even Start family literacy programs. Since the IPQs for adult education had been finalized in previous years, one focus of the project was to develop those that were to be used in early childhood education.

Three institutions of higher education were involved in the project during the first year: The Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (CIRCLE), The Texas Center for Adult Literacy and Learning (TCALL), and The Texas Family Literacy Center, University of Texas at Austin. The role of CIRCLE, University of Texas at Houston Health Science Center, was twofold. First, CIRCLE staff identified appropriate instruments for assessment in early childhood education. Second, CIRCLE staff provided opportunities for staff members in Head Start and Even Start programs in the State to become familiar with those instruments and to learn the basic requirements for their proper administration. Those opportunities were provided through a series of training meetings in the State during the summer of 2000.

The role of TCALL was twofold as well. The first role was to attend some of the CIRCLE training sessions mentioned above. The second role was to conduct follow-up meetings with Even Start programs in the State. Input from those attending the meetings provided information regarding (1) the perception of the effectiveness of the training held by CIRCLE, (2) the status of frequency of use of the instruments, and (3) the extent to which programs plan to use the instruments in the future.

Findings from the meetings included:

1. Only 51% of Even Start programs in the state were represented at the focus group meetings.

2. Participants learned much about the instruments. However, they do not feel adequate to administer them properly without more "in-depth" training.

3. Although there was some familiarity with all of the instruments, the participants' responses revealed that Preschool Language Survey, Third Edition (PLS-3), the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Third Edition (PPVT-III), and the Bayley Infant Neurodevelopmental Screener (BINS) are the most-widely used early childhood assessments in Even Start in Texas.

4. Participants identified strengths and weaknesses for all of the five instruments demonstrated in the CIRCLE training.

5. Some programs, especially those that are newly-funded, plan to add at least one of the instruments to their assessment package.

6. There were several recommendations for the Texas Education Agency in regard to future training for assessment in Even Start programs. Some of these recommendations addressed:

    a. Timing of assessment training
    b. Cost of assessment instruments
    c. Standardization of assessment across the state; and
    d. Program accountability being based mostly upon testing

7. There were also several recommendations in regard to the IPQs, including:

    a. Input from Early Childhood specialists in the development of the IPQs
    b. Accountability based upon factors that are beyond a local program's control
    c. Standardization vs. the unique needs of each program

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Introduction

Almost 30 percent of Texas children live in poverty and almost half of all public school students are considered to be economically disadvantaged. The Texas Adult Literacy Study also documents that 27 to 28 percent of all Texas adults function in the lowest level of literacy and another 25 to 27 percent function in the second lowest level.

Family literacy is a model that can expand the promise of public education from early childhood to adulthood. Strengthening and expanding family literacy services is imperative for Texas if education is to fulfill that promise.

The objectives of the Families First Initiative are:

1. To strengthen Texas family literacy projects through development, implementation and refinement of Indicators of Program Quality (IPQs).

As bases for evaluating Even Start project program performance and improvement over time, development and implementation of Indicators of Program Quality will strengthen family literacy services. The IPQs will provide a framework for local family literacy projects to tell *how well they are doing,* and *where they need to improve* by providing information on the performance of each participant (children and parents). The IPQs will also serve as a framework for measures of continuous improvement over time so that family literacy projects can track sustained success or needed areas of improvement.

2. To strengthen Texas family literacy through implementation of professional development and technical assistance for family literacy staff based upon the best available research on emerging literacy, language development, and reading instruction.

Professional development will be based on the best available research on emerging literacy, language development, and reading instruction, especially for families who are limited English proficient, migrant, or homeless, as well as adults and children with disabilities. A professional development plan will be structured to assist family literacy projects as they *build their own local capacity* through a "trainer of trainers" approach and will encourage family literacy projects to develop their own training teams.

3. To expand family literacy services through coordination and integration of resources of the programs represented on the consortium.

The Family First Consortium includes representatives from:

- The Texas Education Agency (Title I, Parts A, B, C, and E, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act; state funded preschool programs, and state funded adult literacy programs; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; Reading Excellence Act);
- The University of Texas State Head Start Collaboration Project;

- The Texas Department of Human Services (TDHS, the state IV-A agency/eligibility for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF));
- The Texas Workforce Commission (Work First and childcare services for TANF Recipients);
- The Governor's Business Council;
- The Texas Family Literacy Center at The University of Texas at Austin;
- The Texas Center for Adult Literacy and Learning at Texas A&M University;
- Del Valle ISD, Northside ISD, Harris County Department of Education, and Child, Inc.,
- The Texas Head Start Association; and
- The Texas Association for Literacy and Adult Education (TALAE).

Amendments to the Reading Excellence Act of 1998 require states to develop Indicators of Program Quality (IPQs) for evaluating Even Start programs. The legislation stipulates that each state's IPQs will include the following indicators, which address progress of eligible child participants:

- Improvement in ability to read on grade level or reading readiness;
- School attendance;
- Grade retention and promotion; and
- Such other indicators as the State may develop.

The Texas Education Agency was awarded a two-year federal grant under the Even Start Family Literacy Statewide Initiative Grant program to assist the State in strengthening family literacy services through the development and implementation of IPQs. One of the Texas Families First Initiative priorities is the development of IPQs for Even Start programs with respect to eligible participants who are children, ages 0-7. Texas intends to develop IPQs that will reflect the child's developmental progress and emergent literacy as the child moves into preschool and elementary education.

The Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (CIRCLE) at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston is involved in the identification of age-appropriate evaluation tools to be used to assess specific aspects of the State Head Start preschool program. The Families First Project intends to leverage the outcomes of CIRCLE's Head Start research for use in developing IPQs in regard to children ages 3-to-5 years in Texas family literacy programs. CIRCLE has identified age-appropriate assessment tools for the family literacy early childhood component, ages 0-3, particularly in the area of developmental progress, as part of the Families First project.

Those assessment instruments are:

- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) III
- TVIP (Spanish edition of the PPVT)
- Expressive Vocabulary Test (EVT)
- Preschool Language Scale -3, English and Spanish Editions (PLS-3);

- Developing Skills Checklist/Lista de Destrezas en Desarrollo (DSC); and
- Bayley Infant Neurodevelopmental Screener (BINS)

Through a series of regional workshops in the Summer of 2000, CIRCLE provided the opportunity for training in the use of these six assessment instruments to Even Start family literacy program staff in the State. "Assessment teams" of 2-3 people from some Even Start projects participated in learning the appropriate uses of the early childhood assessments. Training sessions were held in Fort Worth, Houston, Dallas and Corpus Christi.

As a follow-up to the training that CIRCLE offered, staff at the Texas Center for Adult Literacy and Learning (TCALL), Texas A&M University-College Station, conducted meetings with "focus groups" at six regional meetings in the Fall of 2000. Participants included Even Start staff who had attended the CIRCLE training as well as those who had not attended or were newly-funded Even Start programs. TCALL acquired input from those who had attended the training in regard to development of the actual indicator statements, feedback on the assessment instruments identified by CIRCLE, and professional development needs related to the IPQs. A report of the information from the work that TCALL coordinated is found on pages 11.

Project Procedures

According to the geographical distribution of Even Start projects in the State, TCALL conducted a series of "focus group" meetings in Huntsville, Dallas, Houston, Edinburg, San Antonio, and Austin to learn:

1. the extent to which the six assessment instruments are being used;
2. the concerns from Even Start programs about the instruments; and
3. information about the content of the IPQs.

A letter was mailed to each Even Start program regarding the most convenient time for the program staff to attend their focus group meetings. The selection for focus group meeting dates was based on the feedback from those program staff.

After the dates were selected, letters were sent out to Even Start programs inviting them to attend the focus group meetings. Each meeting was held from 9 A.M. to 12 P.M. in a regional Education Service Center. It began with an introduction of the purpose of the meeting, followed by participants' comments on the issues regarding Performance Indicators, assessment instruments identified by CIRCLE, plus assessment instruments that are being used in Even Start programs but were not identified during the CIRCLE training.

TABLE 1

Participation in Each Focus Group Meeting							
Site	Huntsville	Dallas	Houston	Edinburg	San Antonio	Austin	Total
Date of meeting	Oct. 27 (Fri.)	Nov. 1 (Wed.)	Nov. 3 (Fri.)	Nov. 7 (Tue.)	Nov. 9 (Thu.)	Nov. 17 (Fri.)	
Number of programs invited	6	11	13	11	13	11	65
Number of participants	7	1	18	15	7	14	55
Number of programs represented	2	1	10	10	5	7	35

Description of Assessment Instruments Identified by CIRCLE

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Third Edition (PPVT-III)

The PPVT-III is a measure of listening comprehension for spoken words in standard English and a screening test of verbal ability. The PPVT-III offers standard scores, percentiles, age equivalents, and other related information. It is suitable for children from 2.6 years of age and older. This individually administered, norm-referenced instrument is offered in two parallel forms -IIIA and IIIB- for reliable testing and retesting.

The test-retest reliability of PPVT-III is .91 to.94. As to validity, the PPVT-III has an average correlation of .69 with the OWLS Listening Comprehension scale and .74 with the OWLS Oral Expression scale. Its correlations with measures of verbal ability are: .91 (WISC-III VIQ), .89 (KAIT Crystallized IQ), and .81 (K-BIT Vocabulary). The Technical References supplement compares PPVT-III scores of eight special populations (speech impaired, language delayed, language impaired, mentally retarded [child and adult], reading disabled, hearing impaired, and gifted) with demographically matched control groups.

Test de Vocabulario en Imagenes Peabody (TVIP)

The TVIP is a measure of receptive vocabulary for Spanish-speaking children and adolescents. It measures Spanish vocabulary based on the widely used PPVT. The TVIP is suitable for children from 2.5 to 18 years of age. The TVIP can be used for the following purposes:

1. evaluating the language development of Spanish-speaking preschool children.
2. screening Spanish-speaking children entering kindergarten or first grade.
3. determining the more effective language of instruction for bilingual children.
4. evaluating the Spanish vocabulary of older students.

Expressive Vocabulary Test (EVT)

The EVT is a measure of expressive vocabulary and word retrieval for Standard American English. The EVT is suitable for children from 2 years of age and older. It offers age-based standard scores, percentiles, test-age equivalents, and other related information. It is an individually administered, norm-referenced test of expressive vocabulary and word retrieval. The EVT and PPVT-III were standardized on the same population of 2,725 examinees ranging in age from 2-6 to 90+. This conforming lets its users make direct comparisons of receptive and expressive vocabulary. The national sample was stratified to match the most recent U.S. Census on gender, race/ethnicity, region, and socioeconomic status.

The EVT features:

1. quick administration and scoring
2. untimed administration rules
3. age-appropriate start items plus basal and ceiling rules
4. full-color stimulus pictures
5. portable testing easel

The EVT has a high degree of internal consistency. Split-half reliabilities range from .83 to .97 with a median of .91. Test-retest studies with four separate age samples resulted in reliability coefficients ranging from .77 to .90, indicating a strong degree of test stability.

Preschool Language Scale -3 (PLS -3)

The PLS-3 measures a broad range of receptive and expressive language skills. The PLS-3 is suitable for children from birth through 6 years of age. The norm-referenced PLS-3 provides standard scores, percentile ranks, and age equivalents for auditory comprehension and expressive communication, and a total language composite. The normative sample of the PLS-3 included more than 1200 children throughout the United States. The PLS-3 focuses on the development of syntax, morphology, vocabulary, vocabulary concepts, and integrative thinking skills (e.g. classification, word definitions). The PLS-3 tasks are ordered to reflect children's acquisition of sequential developmental milestones in language.

Data provided in the Examiner's Manual shows evidence of reliability. The tasks in PLS-3 are homogenous (internal consistency), PLS-3 scores are dependable and stable across repeated administrations (test-retest reliability), and scoring is objective and consistent across examiners (inter-rater reliability).

The same manual also provides data that shows evidence of validity. Research conducted with the PLS-3 provides evidence that it offers a thorough and balanced sample of language behaviors (content validity), it consistently differentiates children who are language disordered from children who are not (construct validity), and its scores are

highly correlated with scores obtained from other valid measures of language ability (concurrent validity).

Developing Skills Checklist (DSC)

The DSC and its Spanish Version, Lista de Destrezas en Desarrollo (La lista), are suitable for Pre-K and K populations. Both measures assess pre-reading, mathematics, social and emotional development, fine and gross motor skills, and print and writing concepts. The test measures the skills and concepts that help determine appropriate instruction for individual as well as groups. The test is individually administered and gives the assessment staff opportunity to observe children in the natural environment of the classroom. It is easy to administer and score. "La Lista" tests the developing skills of Spanish-speaking children in Bilingual, English as a Second Language, and Title I Programs. La Lista uses standard Spanish common to all dialects and incorporates positive references to Spanish Speaking cultures.

Bayley Infant Neurodevelopmental Screener (BINS)

The BINS is designed to identify infants between the ages of 3 and 24 months who are developmentally delayed or have neurological impairments. It is appropriate for different developmental ages. The BINS includes a subset of items from the Bayley Scales of Infant Development-Second Edition as well as items that assess muscle tone and quality of movement. It is a tool for screening infants to identify them for further diagnostic testing. The BINS emphasizes a process approach by considering how an ability is expressed, rather than simply whether the ability is exhibited.

Data Acquired by TCALL

Comments on Training Held by CIRCLE

Participants attending the TCALL-conducted Fall 2000 focus group meetings offered these comments regarding the CIRCLE-led Summer 2000 training sessions.

- The training sessions provided a good overview of the assessment instruments. However, participants do not feel comfortable about their abilities to administer the test accurately.

- There seemed to be differences in the quality of facilities available, differences in the trainers as well as the information that different trainers provided. For example, some participants at the CIRCLE trainings were told about video certification process for the Bayley Infant Neurodevelopmental Screener, but some were not. It should be noted that the trainers were sometimes operating under difficult circumstances. At one sight, almost twice as many Head Start participants attended as were expected and the trainer had to find another site at the "last minute". That also constrained the adequacy of materials available.

- Most participants think that more intensive training is needed on administering the assessment instruments. They would like to see videos of the various assessments being administered. They also think it is important for them to receive training of increased intensity and quality (similar to the BEST and TABE training in adult education) so that they are confident to administer the tests.

Comments on Assessment Instruments Identified by CIRCLE

Remarks concerning each of the assessment instruments that CIRCLE identified in its Summer training sessions are provided below.

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Third Edition (PPVT-III)

- *Advantage:*
  a. The PPVT-III is quick, fast, and easier to administer and score than other assessment instruments.

- *Disadvantages:*
  a. The portion of Word Recognition is a bit "limited". The participants indicated that they want a test that addresses more.
  b. Some pictures do not communicate the meaning intended very well.
  c. Acquiring the basal and "top" levels requires too much time--the standards are often not realistic of the child's real ability.
  d. Attention span of the children can be a problem.
  e. It is quick and somewhat accurate for baseline assessment, but not for exit assessment.
  f. School counselors sometimes use it for diagnosis purposes. It can cause problems when two different results are reported from the counselors and Even Start program staff.

The Test de Vocabulario en Imagenes Peabody (TVIP)

- *Advantage:*
  a. The TVIP is quick, fast, and easier to administer and score compare to other assessment instruments.

- *Disadvantages:*
  a. There was not enough training provided for its users to administer and interpret the test.
  b. It does not seem accurate.
  c. The TVIP is not equivalent to the PPVT-III; therefore, no comparison between TVIP scores with PPVT-III scores can be made.

The Expressive Vocabulary Test (EVT)

- No Even Start program staff members that attended the focus group meetings were using the EVT during 2000.

The Preschool Language Scale -3 (PLS -3)

- *Advantages:*
  a. It is a good instrument for children 18 months to 3 years of age.
  b. The PLS -3 gives teachers a good idea about what to do in the classroom, and they can translate PLS -3 scores to classroom activities.
  c. Age is a concern, but the PLS -3 has a chart for conversion.
  d. It is often chosen due to familiarity.

- *Disadvantages:*
  a. Scoring is time-consuming.
  b. It seems to score the students lower than they should be scored.
  c. Some words don't translate well into Spanish.
  d. It requires a long attention span--45 minutes, which can be a problem when testing young children.
  e. Some content is not relevant to what children do and can relate to.
  f. Not all questions are related to early childhood instruction.
  g. The PLS -3 is suitable for English children, but not for non-English speaking children.
  h. Using both English and Spanish versions is more problematic.
  i. The PLS -3 is used as an assessment tool by Even Start programs and as a diagnostic tool by Special Education program. Problems occur when two different results are reported for the same children.
  j. Most participants feel a need for more training before being comfortable using it, although they are using it now.

The Developing Skills Checklist (DSC)

- *Disadvantages:*
  a. It is not age-appropriate for the population some Even Start programs serve.
  b. It is not appropriate to compare the scores from English and Spanish versions of the DSC because they are not equivalent.

The Bayley Infant Neurodevelopmental Screener (BINS)

- *Advantages:*
  a. Some feel that adequate training on the BINS can be obtained from the manual when the video, which can be ordered, supplements the manual. The video is very explicit for training.
  b. It provides a score for those below two years of age.
  c. It is easy to use and score.
  d. The BINS is easier to administer than PLS -3, especially for testing non-verbal children.

- *Disadvantages:*
  a. The packet of materials needed for testing can be a burden.
  b. Children are not doing anything. It is a "passive" instrument and difficult to administer.
  c. Many program staff members are not comfortable to make a judgment based on observations.

Comments on Assessment Instruments Not Identified by CIRCLE

The participants attending the focus group meetings provided comments on several assessment instruments that CIRCLE did not identify. They are Denver II, Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), PALM, Rossetti Infant Toddler Language Scale, IDAS, I-pass from Kaplan, Brigance Screens, Oral language proficiency test, IDEA Oral Language Proficiency Tests (IPT), and CEDEN. When information could be located, a brief description and comments for each assessment instrument are provided below.

Denver II:

- *Description:*
  Denver II is designed to be used with children between birth and six years of age and is administered by assessing a child's performance on various age-appropriate tasks. The test is valuable in screening asymptomatic children for possible problems, in confirming intuitive suspicions with an objective measure, and in monitoring children "at risk" for developmental problems, such as those who have experienced perinatal difficulties.

- *Comments:*
  a. It tells how much delay a child is at certain months of age.
  b. It is very practical.
  c. It shows what a child should be doing at various ages.

Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)

- *Description:*
  The ASQ is a screening tool used on home visits, mailings to families and telephone calls. The provider examines the child's developmental levels through questions answered by the caregivers/parents.

- *Comments:*
  a. It observes daily activities.
  b. Some programs use Ages & Stages every three months for progress assessment.
  c. It can help parents assess children.
  d. There is a Spanish and an English version as well as a training video. The test developers also provide training.
  e. It could be used during home visits.

PALM

- *Description:*
  No information was found by TCALL staff.

- *Comments:*
  a. It measures social and emotional development of a child. It is not a reading readiness test, but it might be useful for Even Start programs.

Rossetti Infant Toddler Language Scale

- *Description:*
  This is a criterion-referenced instrument designed to provide the clinician with a comprehensive tool that assesses the preverbal and verbal aspects of communication and interaction in young children. It measures interaction-attachment, pragmatics, gesture, play, language comprehension, and language expression. The results from this assessment tool reflect the child's mastery of skills in each of the areas assessed at three-month intervals. This scale promotes the family's role as a full partner and may be administered in the home, diagnostic center, school, clinic, or hospital setting.

- *Comments:*
  a. Rossetti Infant Toddler Language Scale requires interaction which can produce positive or negative reactions from the child.
  b. It is not a developmental assessment instrument.
  c. It is more open and contextual than other instruments for age-specific groups.
  d. It includes social-emotional measures that are important to some coordinators.

IDAS

- *Description:*
  No information was found by TCALL staff.

- *Comments:*
  a. It acquires mostly observational data which can be subjective.
  b. It covers 6 important skills/developmental areas, and is very appropriate to measure what children actually do.
  c. It can be used regularly to show parents the progress of their children.

I-pass

- *Description:*
  No information was found by TCALL staff.

- *Comments:*
  a. It is a good test for young children (0-3 years of age)

Brigance Screens

- *Description:*
  Brigance Screens are designed to assist teachers with program planning, indicate developmental problems--language, learning, or cognitive delays--and identify children who have academic talent or intellectual giftedness. It samples children's skills in the following areas: fine and gross motor, general knowledge, language, pre-academic/academic, graphomotor development. It also includes a set of at-risk guidelines for use in prevention programs to identify children in need of prompt referral.

- *Comments:*
  a. It is used for pre-and-post test data in some Even Start programs.

Oral Language Proficiency Test

- *Description:*
  No information was found by TCALL staff.

- *Comments:*
  a. It is used for pre-K and K
  b. It is for oral language screening, not a diagnosis tool.
  c. It helps to determine a child's fluency level in speaking English.

IDEA Oral Language Proficiency Tests (IPT)

- *Description:*
  The IPT is available for pre-kindergarten through grade 12 students. It is written in both English and Spanish. The IPT oral tests provide Non-, Limited, and Fluent English and Spanish Speaking designations. All IPT tests are written and normed to meet the standards of the American Psychological Association, and the IPT I&II-Oral Spanish Tests are written and normed specifically for Spanish-speaking students.

- *Comments:*
  a. It is easy to administer.
  b. It is accurate.
  c. It is also used for placement for bilingual children, and ESL.

CEDEN

- *Description:*
  No information was found by TCALL staff.

- *Comments:*
  a. It is a checklist designed to address children from 0 to 5 years of age.
  b. It is very similar yet covers more developmental areas than PLS-3.

Early Language Milestone Scale, Second Edition

- *Description:*
  This language screening tool assesses language development from birth to 36 months of age and intelligibility of speech from 18 to 48 months of age. It has three subtests: Auditory Expressive Language Development, Auditory Receptive Language Development, and Visual Language Development. It is sensitive to various causes of speech or language delay, including hearing loss, mental retardation, autism, dysarthria, and stuttering. It does not yield a specific developmental diagnosis. It is designed to identify or quantify language delay in very young children so that they may receive care as promptly as possible.

- *Comments:*
  No comment was made.

Comments on Performance Indicators Provided by TEA

- An indicator for Early Childhood Development should be included in any program evaluation.
- TEA needs to inform the programs what assessment instruments will be required much earlier than in the past so that staff may be properly and thoroughly trained to administer the tests in a timely manner.
- TEA should adopt a policy for each program to use instrument(s) appropriate for its population.
- Even Start programs have no control over grades, retention, and promotion of children in pre-K or higher grade-levels. Should they still be held accountable?

Overall Concerns and Questions

Regarding the Division of Adult and Community Education, Texas Education Agency:

- The expense increased in purchasing assessment instruments is a concern of Even Start programs.
- It will be beneficial to know what all Even Start programs are using for assessment, and to exchange information among the program staffs.
- If every program needs to follow the same indicators, why not require every program to use the same instrument(s)?

Regarding Assessment Instruments

- Assessment instruments identified by CIRCLE only look at part of the child. They do not look at the whole child.
- Should evaluators administer the tests?
- What should a staff do when a program has Spanish-speaking students and non-Spanish speaking teachers?
- When children are neither English-proficient nor Spanish-proficient, what kind of instrument should be used?
- Can college students who are learning to administer tests partner with Even Start programs so that they could give the tests?

Regarding Training

- Are there videos available for all of the assessment instruments for individual training?
- Who will provide the training? What are the qualifications required for those who are to administer the tests?
- Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) is funded throughout the state. They serve diagnosis purposes and early intervention for children with developmental delay.

They conduct home visits and help parents to help language delayed children. Can ECI train people to give tests? Can they give training on a group basis?

- Can Even Start programs as a group ask test/assessment instrument publishers to send people to train Even Start personnel? If a sufficient number of people need to be trained, then publishers will sometimes provide needed training.
- Where can Even Start programs observe the instruments actually being implemented?

Survey Results

The staff at TCALL designed the Families First Even Start survey which was distributed to every participant in each focus group meeting. The survey contained questions related to the use of the assessment instruments identified by CIRCLE, the use of assessment instruments not identified by CIRCLE, and participants' feedback on the focus group meetings held by TCALL. Forty-eight participants completed the survey that was administered at the conclusion of each focus group meeting.

TABLE 2

Number of Participants Who Completed the Survey							
Site	Huntsville	Dallas	Houston	Edinburg	San Antonio	Austin	Total
Number of participants	7	1	13	10	7	10	48

The Use of Assessment Instruments Identified by CIRCLE

Among the six assessment instruments identified by CIRCLE, twelve (25%) participants indicated that they are using Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-III), 5 (10%) are using TVIP (Spanish edition of the PPVT), 4 (8%) are using Expressive Vocabulary Test (EVT), 30 (63%) are using Preschool Language Scale-3 (PLS-3), 5 (10%) are using Developing Skills Checklist (DSC), and 10 (21%) are using Bayley Infant Neurodevelopmental Screener (BINS). Table 3 shows the frequency of use by focus group participants of each assessment instrument identified by CIRCLE.

TABLE 3

The Frequency of Use by Focus Group Participants of the Assessment Instruments Identified by CIRCLE						
Assessment Instrument	PPVT-III	TVIP	EVT	PLS-3	DSC	BINS
Number of participants	12	5	4	30	5	10

Twenty-four (50%) participants indicate that the people in their programs administrating the assessment instruments were trained, 12 (25%) participants do not think that the

people in their programs administrating the assessment instruments were appropriately trained, and 12 (50%) did not respond to this question. Table 4 shows those data.

TABLE 4

How Were People Trained to Use Assessment Instruments n = 21*						
Trained by	District	Manual	CIRCLE	College/ University courses	Previous Job	Workshops vs. Training sections
Number of participants	10	3	7	0	0	3

* Some participants were trained in multiple ways.

In the survey, the participants who have used the assessment instruments identified by CIRCLE responded to the question regarding user-friendliness of the assessment instruments. Table 5 shows the results.

TABLE 5

Responses Regarding User-Friendliness of Assessment Instruments					
	Very User-friendly	User-friendly	Somewhat User-friendly	A Little User-friendly	Not User-friendly
PPVT-III (n=10)	1	5	3	1	0
TVIP (n=5)	0	4	0	1	0
EVT (n=3)	0	2	0	1	0
PLS-3 (n=26)	1	11	10	4	0
DSC (n=5)	1	1	0	3	0
BINS (n=8)	3	2	2	1	0

In the same survey, the participants who have used the assessment instruments identified by CIRCLE responded to the question regarding the overall satisfaction of these assessment instruments. Table 6 shows the results.

TABLE 6

Responses Regarding Overall Satisfaction of Assessment Instruments					
	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	A Little Satisfied	Not Satisfied
PPVT-III (n=11)	0	5	5	1	0
TVIP (n=5)	0	3	1	1	0
EVT (n=3)	0	2	0	1	0
PLS-3 (n=26)	1	8	12	5	0
DSC (n=5)	1	1	0	3	0
BINS (n=9)	3	3	2	1	0

The Use of Assessment Instruments Not Identified by CIRCLE

The participants are also using other assessment instruments. Those instruments in order of frequency of use are as follows: Denver II, Early Language Milestone Scale, IDEA Oral Language Proficiency Tests (IPT), Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), Brigance Screens, Home Screening Questionnaire Checklist, Rossetti Infant Toddler Language Scale, Parent-teacher Survey, CEDEM, Baylor University Observational Checklist, Partners for Learning, PSI, Home Gown Checklist, IDS, and Infant Development Assessment Scale. Table 7 shows the most commonly used assessment instruments, and the number of participants who are using or used them.

TABLE 7

The Frequency of Use by Focus Group Participants of Assessment Instruments Not Identified by CIRCLE

Assessment Instrument	Denver II	Early Language Milestone Scale	IPT	Brigance	ASQ	Home Screening Questionnaire Checklist	Rossetti Infant Toddler Language Scale
Number of participants	11	4	4	2	2	2	2

Other Related Information

Twenty-four (50%) participants indicated that the focus group meetings held by TCALL helped them very much, 10 (21%) think that the meetings helped them much, 9 (19%) participants think that the meetings helped them some, 4 (8%) think that the meetings help them a little, and 1 (2%) did not respond to the question.

After the focus group meetings were initiated, TCALL staff added the following question "*Did you attend the training section on Early Childhood Assessment Instruments?*" Of 21 participants, 6 (29%) responded yes and 15 (71%) responded no.

Twenty-one participants were asked the question "*Since the training (held by CIRCLE), what instruments have you purchased or planned to purchase?*" Table 8 shows the results.

TABLE 8

Instruments Purchased or Planned to Purchase After Attending the Training by CIRCLE
n = 6*

Instrument	PPVT-III	TVIP	EVT	PLS-3	DSC	BINS	Others
Number of participants	4	3	0	5	2	2	1

* Some participants purchased or planned to purchase more than one assessment instrument after attending the training by CIRCLE.

Twenty-one participants were asked the questions "*After today's (focus group) meeting, what instruments do you plan to purchase?*" Table 9 shows the results.

TABLE 9

Instruments Planned to Purchase After Attending the Focus Group Meetings by TCALL. n = 7*

Instrument	PPVT-III	TVIP	EVT	PLS-3	DSC	BINS	Others
Number of participants	0	0	1	5	1	1	2

* Some participants planned to purchase more than one assessment instrument after attending the focus group meetings by TCALL.

Overall Recommendations

Regarding the Division of Adult and Community Education, Texas Education Agency:

Participants' Recommendations

- Have final proposed measures (and IPQs) include Early Childhood Specialists' recommendations.
- Follow up any future focus group meetings with a local contact at TEA to provide intensive training for assessment and/or other activities. An attempt to re-activate the regional cluster groups should also be initiated.
- The State needs to be consistent in assessment instruments across different grants and programs so there is no need to test the child more than once. This has become a problem with counselors in some school districts.
- There is a need for an Even Start Early Childhood Consultant at TEA.

TCALL Staff's Recommendations

- Hold another round of cluster meetings after the 2001 post-testing (June or August) and make it mandatory that every program be represented. The focus of the meetings should be to initiate some kind of standard assessments while allowing programs to assess for their individual needs.
- Clarify if the IPQs will be for children's language skills in English, or language skills in general.

- Make sure that the Requests for Application (especially for "renewal grants") and their subsequent approval are announced early enough so that programs can avoid losing experienced staff due to the lateness of funding.

Regarding Assessment Instruments:

Participants Recommendations

- Have partnership with local university to have someone administer the tests.
- Find an instrument that simply measures vocabulary and language by observing and recording all words said within a certain time period.
- Observe the child frequently in her/his natural environment, not depending upon a one-day performance.
- Take the teacher's evaluation into consideration because he or she knows what a child can do much more than what a test will show.
- Develop assessment instruments that are developmentally appropriate and target the audience.

TCALL Staff's Recommendations

- Focus on assessments that are available in both English and Spanish.
- Identify assessment instrument(s) for accessing reading readiness. The six instruments used in the training focus more on language development, whereas reading readiness is one of the elements in the performance indicators. Otherwise, change the performance indicator to reflect language development.

Regarding Training:

Participants' Recommendations

- Provide more training on assessment instruments so that program personnel can be confident in what they tell parents, and in any referrals they might make for children who are developmentally delayed.
- Provide competent technical assistance/follow-up after the training has been completed.

TCALL Staff's Recommendations

- Provide intensive training for local Even Start programs in regard to appropriate methods for using assessment instruments, especially those previously demonstrated. The suggested time for training is May, June, or August.

- Have every program represented at the training sessions, especially those staff (or others) who are conducting assessment. Make certain space is available. The preferred method is to allow observations of assessments being conducted in a natural or simulated environment. However, quality videos would be quite useful for this purpose.

- Offer intensive training in administering specific assessment instruments as opposed to the general training that CIRCLE offered in Summer 2000.